

May 16, 2008

Kevin J. Martin, JD
Chairman
Federal Communication Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Martin:

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) CG Docket No. 03-123 related to the 2008 Telecommunication Relay Service (TRS) funding rates proposed by the National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA). The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the professional and scientific association representing over 130,000 speech-language pathologists, audiologists and speech-language and hearing scientists qualified to meet the needs of the estimated 49 million (or 1 in 6) children and adults in the United States with communications disorders. ASHA supports the NECA recommended 2008-2009 reimbursement rate of \$2.7248. The Association also supports the recommendation that Speech-to-Speech (STS) outreach funding should be maintained at \$1.131.

ASHA believes that consumer outreach is important to improving access to telecommunications for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired. We applaud both the FCC and NECA for supporting efforts to make information about STS available to consumers by maintaining the outreach fund. It is our understanding that only a small percentage of consumers for which STS may be an option, are aware the service is available. In addition, ASHA requests the FCC ensure work with state agencies to ensure that STS services are made available in all states. In addition, to ensure compliance with Section 225 of the Communication Act, which requires that equivalent voice telephone services be made available to individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired, we request that the FCC ensure that STS funding is equitable to that of other telecommunications relay services.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on CG Docket No. 03-123. If you have any questions, please contact Ingrida Lusi, ASHA's Director of Federal and Political Affairs at (202) 624-5951 or via email at ilusi@asha.org.

Sincerely,

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